Whenever any incident of illegal mining comes to the notice of the colliery authorities within the leasehold areas, patrolling by the CISF is intensified. At times, such raids are conducted jointly by CISF and the local Police. After the illegally mined coal and implements of illegal mining and transportation of coal are seized during the course of raids, the same are handed over to the local police station by the coal companies and First Information Reports are lodged.

Jute Bags

*496. SHRI DWARAKA NATH DAS: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether mandatory requirement of packing cement in jute bags has been scaled down from existing 50 per cent of the total output to 40 percent for 1997-98 and 30 percent in 1998-99;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to save the interests of thousands of jute growers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The steps taken by the Government to save the interests of the jute growers inter-alia include issue of Jute Packaging Orders from time to time under the Jute Packaging Materials (Compulsory Use in Packing Commodities) Act, 1987, fixation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for raw jute and entry into market of the Jute Corporation of India, whenever needed.

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

*497. SHRI ANANT GUDHE: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether under new package of Cooperation with UNIDO the Government have proposed to set up an International Centre for advancement of manufacturing technology with a view to bridging the gap between R & D and commercialisation through international partnership;

(b) if so the details thereof alongwith important features;

(c) the tentative locations under consideration for setting up the centre and present status of the proposal; and

(d) the total cost of the project and financing pattern proposed?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (d) There is a proposal to establish International Centre for Advancement of Manufacturing Technology (ICAMT) in cooperation with UNIDO. The ICAMT is proposed to be located in Bangalore.

The Mission of ICAMT will be to act as gatekeeper for developing countries in the field of Advanced Manufacturing Technology. By tracking the latest world wide developments in leading edge technologies (Hardware) and the latest management/organisational practices (Software); the gap will be bridged between research and development organisations, and market demand within developing countries.

The activities of ICAMT will include courses, workshops, conferences, serving as focal point on a global network of affiliated centres, the completion of the pilot projects, advisory services, information collection and dissemination and preparation and maintenance of an international rosters of experts.

Currently, UNIDO is undertaking a feasibility study for this project. This feasibility study will assess developing countries' support for the Centre, its potential impact, financial requirements, long-term sustainability and possible funding pattern. The feasibility study report being prepared by UNIDO will bring out the total cost of the project and financing pattern.

Eliminating Import Tariff on Non-Technology Products under WTO

498. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI:

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has joined the non-technology agreement/Information Technology agreement of World Trade Organisation aimed at eliminating import tariff on wide range of non-technology products/information products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the time fixed for eliminating tariff on all products;

(d) the main products covered under the above agreement;

(e) the details of countries who have joined WTO and to what extent the above agreements are likely to help India in the development of latest technology in the field of information technology; and

(f) the likely impact of the said agreements on the domestic industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir, India has joined The Information Technology Agreement (ITA) visualised in the "Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products" adopted at Singapore in December 1996 on the occasion of the first Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation.

ITA aims to expand the world trade in information technology products. After extensive discussions with its trading partners, India filed its final Schedule of Concessions with regard to information technology products on 25-3-97 in Geneva and India's schedule has been approved by consensus by the Participants of the ITA. In all 217 tariff lines have been included in India's Schedule of Concessions. In respect of 95 tariff lines the duty will be brought to zero by 2000. In respect of 4 tariff lines the duty will be brought to zero by the year 2003, in respect of 2 tariff lines the duty will be brought to zero by the year 2004. The remaining 116 tariff lines will reach zero duty level by the year 2005.

(d) and (e) The ITA covers the following main categories of products: computers (including printers, scanners, monitors, hard-disc drives, power supplies etc.), telecom products (including fax machines, modems, pagers, etc) semiconductors (including chips and wafers), semiconductors manufacturing equipment, software products (e.g. diskettes and CD-ROMs) and scientific instruments. The Participants of ITA, representing countries which account for more than 90% of world trade in the information technology products, include Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Estonia, EU (15 countries), Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Singapore, Slovak and Czech Republic, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey and United States.

(f) India decided to join the Information Technology Agreement after extensive discussions with various industry associations. There was general acceptance of the need to join ITA by most of the Associations. International trade in information technology is presently of the order of US $ 500 billion. In the next century, this sector is expected to be the largest industry in the World and may provide the foundation upon which most of the other industries will be built. Not only will stability and predictability of Govt. policy in this sector attract foreign investment, India will also benefit by the fact that information technology will be available to other industrial sectors at relatively low cost, thus ensuring general increase in productivity all round.

Dismantling of Barriers in Agricultural exports

*499. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the progressive dismantling of barriers in agricultural exports, which started as part of the structural adjustment programme five years ago, is yet to bring about a perceptible change in the sectoral pattern of exports;

(b) if so, whether future trading have been extended to cotton, raw jute and jute goods;

(c) if so, the total agricultural exports that have been estimated during 1997-98;

(d) to what extent it will be more in comparison to 1996-97; and

(e) further steps taken by the Government to boost the export of agricultural exports?

THE MINITER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) There has been a perceptible sift in the sectoral composition of agricultural exports. The items whose share increased during the period 1991-92 to 1996-97 (April-February'97) are Rice (basmati & non-basmati), HPS Groundnut, Sugar and molasses, Horticultural and floricultural products and Miscellaneous processed items. The items whose share in the agricultural exports declined during the same period were Tobacco, Spices, Cashew, Guargum meal and Oil meals. The total agricultural exports (excluding tea, coffee, raw cotton and marine products) increased from Rs. 4343.12 Crores in 1991-92 to Rs. 13720.60 Crores in 1996-97 (April-February 1997).

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) The export projections for the year 1996-97 of the Eighth Five Year Plan by the Planning Commission for agricultural and allied products (excluding tea, coffee, raw cotton and marine products) was Rs. 10,398 Crores (at 1991-92 prices). The actual achievement during 1996-97 (April-February 97) was Rs. 13720.60 Crores. The export projection for the Ninth Five Year Plan including the year 1997-98 are yet to be formulated.

(e) Steps taken to enhance export of agricultural and allied products include simplification of inspection procedures, removal of minimum export price and quantity restrictions on selected items, provision of concessional credit, product development to meet international needs, extension of benefits avialable under the scheme of EOUs/EPZs to agriculture sector and permitting 50% sale in the domestic tariff area, assistance to exporters for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control, air freight subsidy on export of selected horticultural, floricultural products and fresh vegetables to identified destinations, promoting export of identified products through brand promotion campaigns, arranging buyer-seller meets and participation in international fairs/exhibitions.

Weaving and Processing Units

*500. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Textile Minister called upon the textile industry to redraft strategies so that there can be more investment in modern weaving and processing units;

(b) whether the Textile Ministry has agreed to invest more in the weaving and processing units in the country;

(c) if so, whether any plan have been formulated in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) to (d) The Union Textile Minister has in different fora